

Summary - The 2017 Season as at August

Grain production outlook for the state has improved over the last month with several good rainfall events over most regions throughout July and the first week in August.

The dryer areas of the state in the northern and eastern Geraldton port zone and the northern and eastern Kwinana port zone have now received several light rainfall events to provide some stock feed and ground cover for the summer but the grain production outlook is still very low and unlikely to change from now on.

The remainder of the state is now on track for close to average grain yields for all crops, except for oats, with the Esperance port zone expecting above average tonnage produced for all grains, excluding oats.

Across WA the expected tonnage of oats is estimated to be in the vicinity of half 2016's production. In many areas, traditional oat growers have conservatively pared back their programs and opportunistic oat growers have not planted at all.

Ironically the looming stockpile issue from 2016 / 2017 has largely evaporated due to the dry start to the season driving strong domestic demand for on farm stock feed for barley and oats.

Expected tonnage of canola and lupins will be less than half of last years' production. This is unlikely to change from now on as the big decrease in tonnages are from the north and east of the state where the season finishes earlier than the remainder of the grain producing areas.

For final wheat and barley tonnages to reach those estimated in this report, the season will need to continue with average rainfall and be cooler than in recent years during grain fill.

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development comments suggest, "an easing of rainfall probabilities, with improved chances of exceeding median", this means whilst spring rains are still likely to be below average there is less chance now that this will occur.

2017 WA Crop production estimates (tonnes)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oats	Lupins	Field pea	State total
Kwinana	2,449,000	966,000	297,000	248,000	138,000	18,000	4,116,000
Albany	1,109,000	850,000	383,000	178,000	54,000	4,000	2,578,000
Esperance	1,250,000	732,000	433,000	10,000	20,000	20,000	2,465,000
Geraldton	700,000	150,000	60,000	3,000	98,000	900	1,011,900
Totals	5,508,000	2,698,000	1,173,000	439,000	310,000	42,900	10,171,000

Note: the grain totals reported are for whole farm production. This includes on-farm seed and feed requirements as well as trade outside of the CBH network.

GIWA gratefully acknowledges the support of DPIRD and contributions from independent agricultural consultants and agronomists in the production of this report.

Geraldton Zone

Recent rains in the region have improved prospects for growers in the dryer areas that had crop out of the ground and were struggling from the conditions. Some of these areas will now return more than just seed for next years' crop as was suggested in the July Crop Report. However, for most growers in the north and eastern areas the rain will only provide some sheep feed and cover for the summer. Growers in the dryer areas faced with no crop, are now starting to secure seed for next years' crop from growers in the western areas who will harvest some grain.

The lupin and canola area in the dryer regions will be down 25 per cent and 20 per cent respectively from previous estimates due to either being sprayed out to control weeds or not germinating.

Areas further west of the zone have improved and most growers will have harvestable crops, but due to the lateness of season grain yields will be lower than average. The western areas of the zone have improved dramatically in the last month and most of the grain produced will be from these areas. Tonnage estimates for the Geraldton port zone have increased from a month ago and it now looks like one million tonnes of total grain is possible.

Kwinana Zone

The Midlands

The west and central areas of the region have continued to improve over the last month and recent rains in the eastern areas will mean that some of the lighter soils that had crop up have a chance of producing harvestable crops. The eastern areas are still faced with either no crop or very low grain yields that may produce enough to return seed.

Crops are generally late for most of the region and even in the western areas where grain yield potential is higher, cool conditions are needed along with more rain to return grain yields closer to historical averages.

Kwinana West

Most areas in the Kwinana West zone have now had around 100mm for the growing season, much of this in July. Coupled with the sub-soil moisture from the rain in summer, crops have improved markedly over the last month. Grain yield estimates are now close to average for the western areas and 80 per cent of average for the remainder of the region.

Barley crops are looking better than most wheat crops and grain yield potential is higher at this stage. Crops are generally thinner than normal and have low tiller numbers. Low tillers will put a cap on grain yield potential even if it continues to rain and conditions are favourable in spring.

With waterlogging and paddock trafficability an issue around Narrogin and surrounds, the unknown will be whether oat crop varieties like Carrolup and Bannister will be harvested for hay, or kept later for grain.

Canola and lupin crops are going to be below average as most are patchy and still at a range of growth stages within individual paddocks.

The better crops are now getting top up applications of fertiliser and some fungicide is going out to protect crops from leaf diseases that are starting to show up in wetter areas of the region.

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Kwinana East

Not a lot has changed in the eastern and north eastern areas of the Kwinana East region over the last month. Areas that have had virtually no rain for the growing season have recently received some rain although it is too late to produce harvestable crops.

The recent rain in dryer areas of the region will now get some sheep feed and cover for the summer but for some growers, there will not be enough crop to get the header out of the shed.

The southern and western areas of the zone are benefiting from the recent rains and even some of the heavier country that was struggling will now make a crop. Crops are still patchy from variable emergence earlier in the season and there are areas within the zone where crops look quite good. Grain production for this region will be well down on average.

Albany Zone

Western Albany

The western areas of the zone have continued to improve and most growers will be looking at close to average grain yields for all crops. The crops in the region are fairly even and not as patchy as further north, this will assist pushing averages up if it keeps raining and temperatures are mild during grain fill.

As crop prospects have improved over the last month, more fertiliser has started to go out and growers have become more vigilant with crop protection sprays. The better managed crops from earlier in the growing season are starting to look well in front of those that received less management input.

Southern Albany

The few dryer areas in the region have now received rain and most of the area is looking to at least average potential grain yields for all crops. Some of the higher rainfall areas close to the coast are starting to get wet but most of the crops are not suffering from waterlogging.

Most of the spray activity in the region is based around leaf disease control with powdery mildew in wheat and barley, leaf rust in barley and some leaf rust in wheat showing in susceptible crops.

There are armyworm in numbers that may need controlling in barley later in the season which has not been a problem for several years.

Eastern Albany (Lakes Region)

Most of the Lakes Region is looking good with some areas possessing above average grain yield potential. Some areas in the west of the zone and far eastern are too wet to spray from the ground as the soil profile is now full following recent rainfall events.

Crops are generally behind those of last year but this could mean less frost risk at flowering time. Those areas of the region that are not waterlogged will still need average rainfall for the rest of the growing season and mild temperatures to reach average grain yields at harvest.

Esperance Zone

The Esperance port zone is still on track for above average grain yields for most crops. The rain has continued to fall across the region and the normally dryer areas in the north are well above average for the year. These lower rainfall areas will contribute significantly to the expected extra tonnage this year.

There is a lot of activity in crop paddocks at the moment with extra fertiliser going out to match the increasing grain yield potential of crops. Most crops have been sprayed for a range of leaf diseases including powdery mildew in wheat and barley, leaf rust and spot type net blotch in barley and some leaf rust in wheat.

Aphids are increasing in numbers in canola, lupins and cereals with most requiring spraying.



Season Outlook

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Most of the southern part of the grainbelt and the south west recorded near-average or better rainfall for July. In contrast, most of the northern region received below average July rainfall. The past four months have seen very low seasonal rainfall across the agricultural areas with much of the northern and central regions receiving less than 30 per cent of normal rain since April. Early August rainfall has been widespread across cropping regions, with falls of 20 to 30mm.

Latest projections from climate models for August to October are indicating an easing of rainfall probabilities, with improved chances of exceeding median. This may mean a relative improvement in rainfall for the remainder of the growing season, but no models are indicating the likelihood of a wetter than normal spring for southern WA.

While some models are continuing to predict higher than average atmospheric pressures to the south of WA, the strength of these patterns appears to be easing. High pressures have been the main climate influence on WA rainfall since April.

Potential wheat yield, based on observed and projected seasonal rainfall, is shown in Figure 1. This figure uses a simple relationship between yield in the absence of constraints and seasonal rainfall. The map provides an overview of relative yield potential across southern WA; estimates for individual locations can be obtained from the DPIRD Potential Yield Tool (refer link below).

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Overview:

- Current climate conditions in the Pacific and Indian Oceans are neutral, the Pacific having relaxed back from earlier warming trends. Model projections indicate a continuation of neutral conditions in these oceans for the rest of 2017.
- Seasonal climate outlooks for rainfall over WA from Australian and international climate models are still indicating below average rainfall being more likely for August to October, though the strength of the probabilities has eased from earlier in the growing season.
- Atmospheric pressure has been higher than average over the southern Indian Ocean and Australia, and is the likely cause for poor seasonal rainfall to the end of July.

Bureau of Meteorology - Seasonal rainfall outlook August to October 2017

- August to October rainfall is likely to be below average for most of southern mainland Australia.
- Night-time temperatures are likely to be warmer than average for most of Australia, though chances are only moderate for the grainbelt of WA. Weather conditions are likely to minimise frost risk in the first half of August.
- Chances of WA having higher than average maximum temperatures are higher, although the risk of warm days is reduced in the first part of August.
- Both of Australia's major climate drivers at this time of year, the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), remain neutral. This means more localised influences such as moderate shifts in the location and strength of the subtropical ridge or local sea surface temperatures are likely to be affecting this outlook.

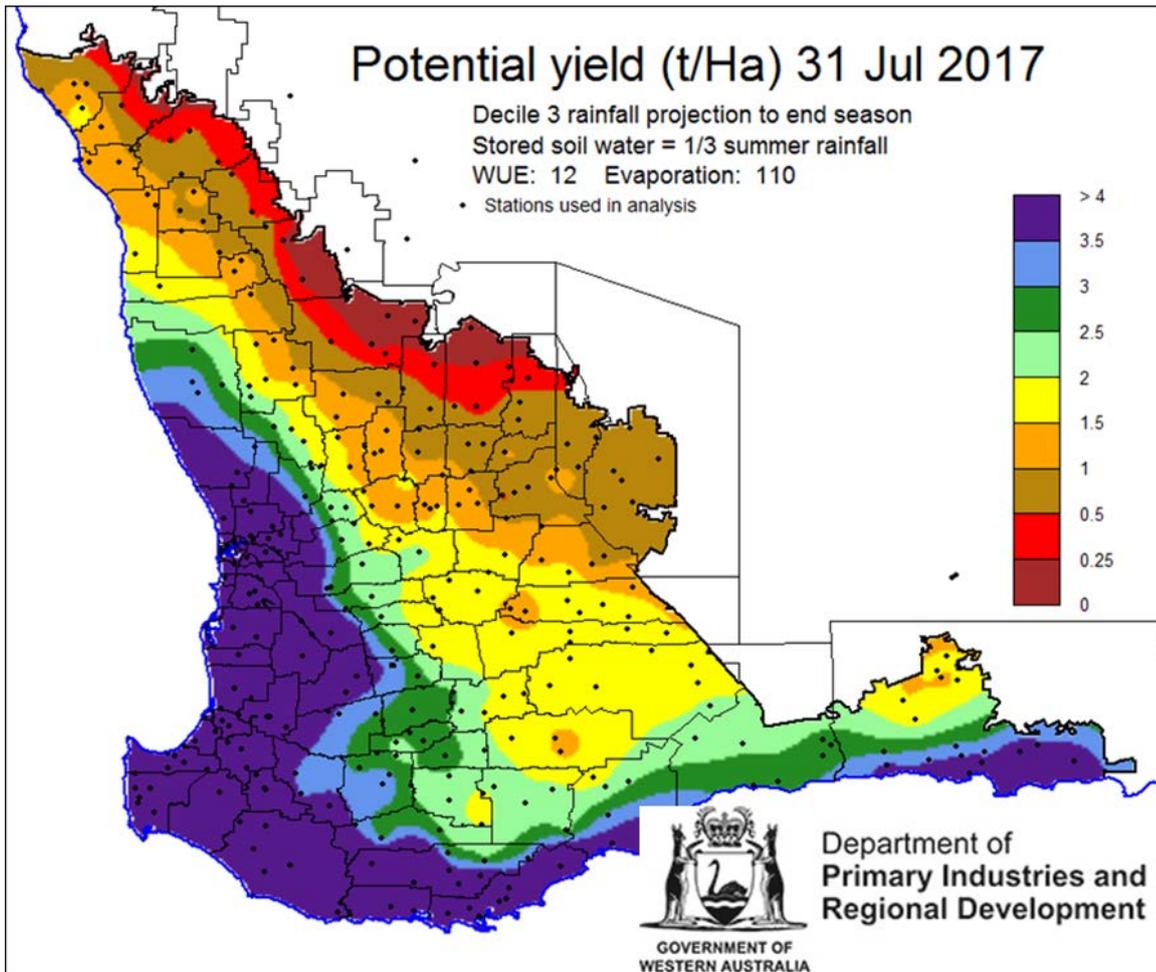


Figure 1. Potential wheat yield based on the French-Schultz relationship, using observed seasonal rain from April to July and with decile 3 rainfall over August to September. Water use efficiency of 12 kg/mm was chosen to reflect recent trends in cropping technology improvement.

Additional information can be sourced from:

[DPIRD: Seasonal Climate Information](#)

[DPIRD: Potential Yield Tool](#)

[BoM: Seasonal Rainfall Outlook, next 3 months](#)

[BoM: Decile rainfall for April to July 2017](#)

[BoM: Landscape soil water balance](#)

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